

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2570
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 187
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
CIA WASHDC
COMSIXTHFLT
COMPHIBRON SIX
COM THREE FOUR MAU
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8938

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION DECEMBER 18-20

REF: BEIRUT 8917 (DTG 171447Z DEC 76)

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1. SUMMARY. FOUR MORE NEWSPAPERS SEIZED DEC 17-18 BY
ARMED TROOPS, INCLUDING L'ORIENT-LE JOUR, AN NAHAR,
AS SAFIR, AND AL NIDA. NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY MADE TOKEN
GESTURE IMPLEMENT FIRST PHASE OF ARMS COLLECTION, THOUGH
ALL GROUPS AWAITING QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE DECISION BEFORE
MAKING FINAL TURNOVER. SAIQA SOURCES REPORT CREATION

OF EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH SUCH INCIDENTS AS
DEC 16 SAIQA-REJECTION FRONT CLASHES IN BEIRUT. PRESS
SPECULATING NEW GOVERNMENT WILL REQUEST EMERGENCY POWERS
FOR THREE-SIX MONTHS AND DECLARE FULL-FLEDGED STATE OF
EMERGENCY. CAMILLE CHAMON, WHO HAS BEEN ILL FOR FIVE DAYS,
MAY HAVE SUFFERED A MINOR HEART ATTACK. PRIMIN AL-HUSS
REPORTEDLY PLEASED AFTER HIS TALKS IN SAUDI ARABIA ON
SUBJECT OF AID. TWO AUTOMOBILES DESTROYED IN EXPLOSION
IN FRONT OF MURABITUN HEADQUARTERS. PHALANGIST VOICE OF
LEBANON CLAIMS AN ENVOY OF PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER WILL VISIT
LLBANON SHORTLY. END SUMMARY.

2. MORE NEWSPAPERS SEIZED.

A. ARMED MEN OCCUPIED OFFICES OF FOUR MORE NEWSPAPERS:
THE PRO-LIBYAN AS SAFIR ON DEC 17 AND THE INDEPENDENTS
L'ORIENT-LE JOUR AND AN NAHAR AS WELL AS THE COMMUNIST DAILY
AL NIDA ON DEC 19 (SEE SEPTTEL). NONE OF THE PAPERS APPEARED
DEC 20. UPI AND NEWSWEEK ALSO HAVE OFFICES IN THE AN NAHAR
BUILDING BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE CTION DIRECTED AT THE AMERICAN
AGENCIES. THREE OF THE TOTAL SEVEN PAPERS NOW OCCUPIED--
AS SAFIR, AL MUHARRIR, AND BEYROUTH--HAVE PUBLISHED SKELETON
EDITIONS FROM UNDISCLOSED LOCATIONS. ON DEC 19 AL MUHARRIR
AND AS SAFIR CARRIED IDENTICAL NEWS STORIES AND HEADLINES;
ONLY THEIR EDITORIALS DIFFERED.

B. BOTH KAMAL JUNBLATT AND RAYMOND EDDE SPOKE OUT ON
THE TAKEOVER. ON DEC 17 JUNBLATT'S REMARKS COVERED BOTH
SIDES OF THE ISSUE. HE CALLED FOR RESIGNATION OF ASF COMMANDER
AL-HAJJ FOR "RETURN TO THE OLD FORMULA WHEREBY THE ARAB
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FORCES WERE UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE ARAB LEAGUE;" BUT
JUNBLATT ALSO NOTED THAT "THE NEWSPAPERS MUST NOT ATTACK
THE SYRIAN ARMY." ON FOLLOWING DAY, EDDE PREDICTABLY PROFESSED
"ASTONISHMENT" GOL WOULD PERMIT "ELEMENTS OF SYRIAN ARMY"
TO OCCUPY LEBANESE NEWSPAPERS.

C. MEANWHILE, ASF COMMANDER AL-HAJJ DEPARTED LEBANON
FOR DAMASCUS WHERE HE EXPECTED TO DISCUSS HANDLING OF THE
PRESS. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR DEC 19 SPECULATED A COMPROMISE
WOULD BE REACHED ALLOWING NEWSPAPERS TO RESUME FULL PUBLICATION
IN RETURN FOR PROMISE TO EXERCISE SELF-RESTRAINT.
AN NAHAR EDITOR MICHEL ABU JAWDEH IN NOTE TO PRESIDENT
SARKIS CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE FORMATION OF A PROVISIONAL
COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH PRESS PROBLEMS.

3. NLP ASSEMBLES SOME ARMS.

A. THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY (NLP) MADE THE FIRST

ALBEIT SMALL GESTURE TO INITIATE TURNOVER OF HEAVY ARMS.
DATT SOURCES AAD PRESS INDICATE THAT ON DEC 18, NLP
MOVED TWO STAGHOUND ARMORED CARS, TWO ARMORED PERSONNEL
CARRIERS, A B-10 87MM RECOILLESS GUN, A 106 MM RECOILLESS
RIFLE, A TRUCK MOUNTED QUAD 23 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT MACHINE
GUN, AN M-30 122 MM HOWITZER AND TWO TRUCKLOADS OF AMMUNITION
FROM BEIRUT TO AN ASSEMBLY AREA IN MOUNTAINS,PRESUMABLY
KASRAWAN.

B. THESE REPRESENT ONLY SMALL PORTION OF NLP'S HEAVY
ARMAMENTS (FOR EXAMPLE, WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE AT LEAST 20
B-10 RECOILLESS GUNS). IN ADDITION, NLP SPOKESMAN SAID
HIS ORGANIZATION WOULD TURN NO ARMAMENTS OVER TO GOL UNTIL
QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE HAD ADOPTED DEFINITIVE PLAN. MEAN-
WHILE, VIRTUALLY ALL BEIRUT NEWSPAPERS REPEATED THAT QUAD-
RIPARTITE COMMITTEE WOULD MAKE NO FINAL DECISION UNTIL
DEC 22, AFTER ASAD AND SADAT HAS CONFERRED ON MATTER.
AN NAHAR ADDED COMMITTEE WOULD WAIT FOR ARAFAT'S RETURN FROM
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HIS TOUR OF ARAB CAPITALS.

4. PALESTINIANS.

A. IN STORY UNDDOBTEDLY INSPIRED BY SAIQA SOURCES,
LOCAL NEWS AGENCY AL SUHUFUYA HAS REPORTED THAT PALESTINIANS
IN LEBANON HAVE PROPOSED CREATION OF EMERGENCY COMMITTEE TO
PREVENT FUTURE CLASSHES SUCH AS THOSE ON DEC 16 BETWEEN SAIQA
AND REJECTIINIST FRONT COMMANDOS. AL SUHUFUYA SAID THE NEW
COMMITTEE WOULD INCLUDE ALL PRINCIPAL PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS
AND WOULD SET UP CONTROL POINTS WITHIN THE REFUGEE
CAMPS. SAME SOURCES SAID RESIDENTS OF THE CAMPS AGREED TO
ACCEPT SAIQA TROOP PRESENCE PROVIDED THAT ASF UNITS WERE
PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
PLO WILL CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL IN DAMASCUS.

B. IN AN INTERVIEW CARRIED BY DEC 20 EDITION OF WEEKLY
MONDAY MORNING, PLO POLITICAL DEPARTMENT HEAD DAROUK KADDOUMI
DECLARED THAT PLO CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN GENEVA CONFERENCE AS LONG
AS SECIRUTY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242 IS NOT AMENDED.

5. AFTER DEC 23.

A. SPECULATION CONTINUES ON STEPS NEW GOVERNMENT WILL
TAKE FOLLOWING EXPECTED VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON DEC 23.
PRESS ANTICIPATES NEW GOVERNMENT WILL ASK FOR EMERGENCY
POWERS FOR THREE TO SIX MONTHS TO LEGISLATE BY DECREE LAWS TO:
1) LEVY TAXES AND DUTIES; 2) ESTABLISH SECURITY MEASURES;
AND 3) MAKE REGULATIONS FOR PRESS.

B. MARONITE PAPER AL BAYRAQ SAYS GOVERNMENT MAY ALSO
DECLARE FULL-FLEDGED STATE OF EMERGENCY DESPITE LEFTIST
OPPOSITION, IN PART BECAUSE OTHER ARAB STATES, EXCEPT
FOR LIBYA AND IRAQ, FAVOR SUCH A STEP. SOME OBSERVERS,
HOWEVER, HAVE COMPLAINED THAT CONSTITUTION DOES NOT PERMIT
GOVERNMENT TO ASSUME "EXCEPTIONAL POWERS."
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6. CAMILLE CHAMOUN ILL.

FORMER PRESIDENT CHAMOUN HAS BEEN CONFINED UNDER STRICT
MEDICAL CARE SINCE DEC 15; HIS DOCTORS PERMIT NO VISITORS.
PRESS SPECULATES THAT CHAMON HAS SUFFERED A MINOR HEART ATTACK.

7. AID AND RECONSTRUCTION.

PRIME MINISTER AL-HUSS SAW KING KHALID AS SCHEDULED
DEC 19 AND EXPRESSED SATISFACTION AT SAUDI ARABIA'S WILLING-
NESS TO PROVIDE AID. HENRI PHAROUN, PRESIDENT OF THE BEIRUT
PORT, TOLD PRESIDENT SARKIS ON DEC 18 THAT PORT'S RECONSTRUCTION
WOULD COST 200 MILLION LEBANESE POUNDS (75 MILLION
DOLLARS), ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR. ON DEC 18,
52,000 BLANKETS AND 700 BUNDLES OF CLOTHING FROM UNHCR AND
BRITISH ORGANIZATION OXFAM ARRIVED AT BEIRUT AIRPORT.

8. MISCELLANEOUS.

A. PHALANGIST VOICE OF LEBANON CLAIMED ON DEC 17 THAT
AN ENVOY OF PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER WOULD VISIT LEBANON
SHORTLY ON FACT-FINDING MISSION.

B. AT 2230 HOURS ON DEC 18, DEVISE EXPLODED IN FRONT
OF HEADQUARTERS OF MURABITUN, LEBANESE NASSERIST MOVEMENT
HADED BY IBRAHIM QULAYLAT. TWO AUTOMOBILES WERE DESTROYED
BUT THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES.

C. TELEPHONE SERVICE BETWEEN BEIRUT AND ZAHLE WAS
RESUMED ON DEC 17, AND LIMITED MAIL SERVICE BEGAN DEC 20.

D. PRESIDENT SARKIS RECEIVED RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR
ALEXANDRE SODATOV FOR ALMOST TWO HOURS ON DEC 17. (SODATOV
HAD RETURNED TO BEIRUT DEC 14 AFTER AN ABSENCE OF MORE THAN
THREE MONTHS.)
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Message Attributes

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